

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00  
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 CAB-02 COME-00 DOTE-00  
EB-08 FAA-00 ( ISO ) W  
-----033601 231538Z /53

O 230517Z APR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2617  
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 8 LINES 4 & 5)

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: EAIR, CASC, UR  
SUBJECT: DOWNED KOREAN AIRLINER: REPORT ON PAN AM RECOVERY  
PLANE ARRIVAL IN HELSINKI.

REF: (A) RUECKERT/FRY TELCON WITH STATE OPS CENTER 4/23/78,  
(B) MOSCOW 8743

1. THE PAN AM RECOVERY PLANE TOUCHED DOWN IN HELSINKI AT 0412  
LOCAL AFTER A ONE HOUR FORTY MINUTE FLIGHT FROM MURMANSK.  
THE JAPANESE AND SOUTH KOREAN AMBASSADORS TO FINLAND MET THE  
AIRCRAFT AND GREETED DEBARKING PASSENGERS. PRESS AND TELEVISION  
COVERAGE WAS VERY EXTENSIVE ALTHOUGH ONLY A FEW PASSENGERS  
WERE ACTUALLY INTERVIEWED DURING DEBARKATION. PASSENGERS WERE  
TAKEN TO DOWNTOWN HELSINKI HOTELS. FINNISH PLANNING FOR THE  
ARRIVAL WAS EXCELLENT AND THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS WERE EFFICIENTLY  
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HANDLED BUT WITH WARMTH AND COMPASSION FOR THE PASSENGERS'  
EXPERIENCE.

2. THE FOLLOWING ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS TO THOSE ALREADY MADE  
IN PREVIOUS TELEGRAMS.

3. JAPANESE EMBOFFS BROUGHT WITH THEM COPIES OF PASSENGER LIST

AND CREW LIST WAS OBTAINED FROM COPILOT CHA SOON DOH (RANKING CREW MEMBER PRESENT) IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN MURMANSK. AS A RESULT, U.S. AND JAPANESE DIPLOMATIC OFFICERS WERE ABLE TO CHECK OFF PASSENGERS AND CREW AS THEY ARRIVED IN MURMANSK AND FILED INTO AIRPORT WAITING ROOM. DIPLOMATIC OFFICERS WERE THUS ABLE TO ESTABLISH WITHOUT QUESTION AT OUTSET THAT ALL CREW AND PASSENGERS, WITH EXCEPTION OF CAPTAIN AND NAVIGATOR, HAD BEEN RELEASED. COUNT WAS 106 LIVE PASSENGERS, AND CREW, 2 DEAD PASSENGERS, AND TWO CREW DETAINED IN KEM, FOR TOTAL OF 110. HEAD COUNT IN AIRCRAFT BEFORE MURMANSK TAKE OFF ESTABLISHED THAT ALL BUT TWO DETAINEES' WERE ON BOARD. SOVIETS MADE NO EFFORT TO WITHHOLD SOUTH KOREAN DIP. POUCHES WHICH THEY PROMPTLY PRODUCED ON REQUEST. POUCHES STORED IN CABIN ON HELSINKI FLIGHT AND RETURNED TO SOUTH KOREAN EMBASSY.

4. DURING INTERVIEWS WITH ENGLISH SPEAKING PASSENGERS DURING FLIGHT TO HELSINKI, FSO RUECKERT FOUND TOTAL UNANIMITY THAT KAL LANDING AT KEM RESULTED IN NO INJURIES. ALL CONCERNED BLAMED INJURIES AND DEATHS ON SOVIET AIRCRAFT GUNFIRE. PASSENGERS WERE HIGH IN PRAISE OF KAL PILOT AND CREW, WHO KEPT UP REASSURING CHATTER DURING LANDING AVERTING ANY ASPECT OF PANIC. THE CREW HANDED OUT PILLOWS, BUFFERS AND STREAM OF INSTRUCTIONS DESIGNED TO PROTECT PASSENGERS AGAINST LANDING SHOCK. LANDING ON FROZEN LAKE WAS DESCRIBED AS MASTERFUL AND SURPRISINGLY SMOOTH, AS AIRCRAFT SKIDDED THROUGH SNOW AND CAME TO REST ON A SMALL HILL ONLY FEET AWAY FROM A LINE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TREES.

5. PASSENGERS SAID SOVIET REACTION TO LANDING WAS SLOW IN COMING. THE FIRST SOVIET SOLDIER WAS SEEN HIDING BEHIND AN ENGINE, GUN DRAWN, APPARENTLY FEARFUL OF THE PLANE'S OCCUPANTS. THE SOLDIER WAS EVENTUALLY JOINED BY OTHERS WHO BUILT A WARMING FIRE A FEW FEET OFF WING TIP, LEADING PASSENGERS TO FEAR ACCIDENTAL CONFLAGRATION FROM LEAKING FUEL TANKS. FINALLY, AFTER TWO HOURS, LANDSCAPE WAS FILLED WITH SKI TROOPS QUOTE COMING FROM EVERYWHERE UNQUOTE. KAL PASSENGERS AND CREW WERE THEN AIRLIFTED TO KEM IN ONE LARGE AND TWO SMALL HELICOPTERS.

6. TREATMENT IN KEM WAS DESCRIBED AS KINDLY. POPULATION WAS HELPFUL AND PROVIDED AMPLE FOOD AND BLANKETS. HOUSING WAS IN A COMMUNAL MEETING HALL, WITH PASSENGERS GETTING COTS IN HALL WHILE CREW MERITED THE STAGE. MEDICAL ASSISTANCE WAS PROMPTLY PROVIDED AND THERE WAS NO HARASSMENT, OTHER THAN LENGTHY INTERROGATION OF KEY FLIGHT CREW MEMBERS.

7. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE APPROXIMATELY 45 MINUTES FOLLOWING THE ARRIVAL OF THE RECOVERED PLANE IN HELSINKI, THE KOREAN

AIR LINES PRESIDENT CHO CHOONG HOO ADOPTED A CONCILIATORY TONE AND EXPRESSED HIS THANKS TO THE SOVIETS FOR THE RETURN OF THE PASSENGERS AND HIS REGRET FOR THE INTRUSION. IN REFERENCE TO THE CREW LEFT BEHIND, THE KAL PRESIDENT EXPRESSED THE HOPE BOTH WOULD SOON BE RETURNED. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, HE SAID THAT "TWO PERSONS WERE KILLED AS A RESULT OF THE SHOOTING AND SEVERAL PERSONS INJURED." HE STATED THAT THE AIRLINE HAD NO FIRM INFORMATION THAT THE SOVIETS HAD WARNED THE AIRCRAFT BEFORE FIRING BUT THAT KAL "ASSUMED" THAT THERE HAD BEEN A WARNING. ACCORDING TO THE KAL PRESIDENT, FURTHER DETAILS WOULD BE "EXPLAINED" WHEN THE AIRCRAFT FLIGHT RECORDER BECAME AVAILABLE. HE IMPLIED THAT THIS HAD BEEN LEFT BEHIND IN THE USSR. THROUGHOUT THE PRESS MEETING, THE KAL OFFICIAL WAS APOLOGETIC FOR THE INCIDENT AND STRESSED THAT THE SAFE RETURN OF THE PASSENGERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WAS THE PRIMARY AIRLINE CONCERN. IN HIS THANKS HE MENTIONED FINLAND, JAPAN, AND THE UNITED STATES.

8. ACTION REQUESTED. PAN AM 727 LEFT MURMANSK FOR HELSINKI FULLY LOADED, LEAVING BEHIND ONE TRUCK LOAD OF GENERAL KAL CARGO. DIPLOMATIC OFFICERS TOLD SOVIET AIRPORT OFFICIALS THAT THEY WOULD BE IN TOUCH MONDAY, APRIL 24, ON DISPOSITION OF REMAINING CARGO. DEPARTMENT REQUESTED APPROACH KAL ON DISPOSITION WISHES AND PROVIDE APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONS TO EMBASSY MOSCOW AND CONGEN LENINGRAD.  
RIDGWAY

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## Message Attributes

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**Copy:** SINGLE  
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**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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